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# **‘LIBERATION’ OR CAPTURE: YOUTH IN BETWEEN ‘HAKUMA’ AND ‘HOME’ DURING CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH IN SOUTHERN SUDAN**

CHERRY LEONARDI

Generational tension and ‘youth crisis’ have been prominent themes in recent analyses of civil conflict in Africa. Field research in Southern Sudan in 2004-6 suggests that the analysis does not fit the Sudanese war. This article examines a structural opposition between the sphere of military/government (the ‘*hakuma*’) and the sphere of ‘home’. It argues that to be a ‘youth’ in Southern Sudan means to inhabit the tensions of the space between these spheres. While attempting to resist capture by either sphere, youth have used their recruitment by the military to invest in their home or family sphere. Their aspiration to ‘responsibility’ illustrates not generational rebellion, but the moral continuity in local society, also evident in discussions of marriage.

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TAKEN LITERALLY THE INFAMOUS SUDAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (SPLA) training slogan – 'even my father, I will give him a bullet'<sup>1</sup> implies that as well as seeking regime change or independence the Sudanese rebellion was about overturning generational control. This has been the assumption behind the only existing interpretations of SPLA recruitment. Willis, for example, drawing largely on previous case studies of rebel recruitment in Eastern Equatoria, attributes Southern Sudanese youth militarisation to 'chronic generational tensions'<sup>2</sup> while Jok highlights 'generational conflict' as sustaining the war in Northern Bahr El Ghazal. This article argues that the situation is more complex than this, and that Jok's additional description of Southern Sudanese youth as living 'under conditions of political conflict where fighting and defending one's family and property is a major preoccupation', might be a more appropriate interpretive key.<sup>3</sup>

Family responsibility for youth recruitment into armed conflicts in Africa has received relatively little examination in the literature.<sup>4</sup> Historical-anthropological explanations for youth violence and militarization tend to focus on the inherent

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Cherry Leonardi ([d.c.leonardi@durham.ac.uk](mailto:d.c.leonardi@durham.ac.uk)) is a Research Associate of the Department of History, Durham University, where she completed a PhD in 2005 on the history of colonial chiefship in Southern Sudan. Fieldwork for this article was conducted during a number of visits to Southern Sudan between 2004 and 2006, but primarily under the auspices of a Leverhulme Trust- and British Institute in Eastern Africa-funded project on the history of chiefs and local political culture since 1956, for which the researcher spent three months in each site – Yei, Juba and Rumbek – between August 2005 and June 2006. Informants came from a range of ages and backgrounds; those who considered themselves 'youth' included graduates, refugee returnees, former or current soldiers, NGO and government employees, unemployed inhabitants of the towns and villages, and cattle-keepers. Interviews using a translator were conducted in vernacular Bari or Dinka, especially in the rural areas, and more informal conversations and observations carried out with English or Arabic speaking people in the towns. Only formally recorded and transcribed interviews are cited in the text. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference on 'Youth in Eastern Africa: past and present perspectives', organized by the British Institute in Eastern Africa and the Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique, Nyeri, Kenya in June 2006. I am very grateful for comments and criticisms from conference participants, Dr Justin Willis, the editors of *African Affairs* and the three anonymous referees.

<sup>1</sup> *Sudan Democratic Gazette* Feb 2001, p. 8; Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with money, war and the state* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996), p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Willis, 'Who put the 'Y' in the BYDA? Youth in Sudan's civil wars', in Barbara Trudell *et al* (eds.), *Africa's Young Majority* (Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh, 2002), pp. 91-112; Eisei Kurimoto, 'Civil war and regional conflicts: the Pari and their neighbours in south-eastern Sudan', in Katsuyoshi Fukui and John Markakis (eds.), *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (James Currey, London, 1994); Simon Simonse, 'Age, conflict and power in the *monyomiji* age systems', in Eisei Kurimoto and Simon Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 1998), pp. 51-78; Simon Simonse, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, centralism and the scapegoat king in southeastern Sudan* (Brill, Leiden, 1992), p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Jok Madut Jok, 'War, changing ethics and the position of youth in South Sudan', in Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, politics and conflict in Africa* (Brill, Leiden, 2005), p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Except Donal Cruise O'Brien, 'A lost generation? Youth identity and state decay in West Africa', in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (Zed Books, London, 1996), pp. 69-70; and, in passing, Caspar Fithen and Paul Richards, 'Making war, crafting peace: militia solidarities and demobilisation in Sierra Leone', in Paul Richards (ed.), *No Peace No War: An anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts* (James Currey, Oxford, 2005), p. 124.

tensions of gerontocratic societies.<sup>5</sup> Research on West-African wars meanwhile invokes a *socio-economic* ‘youth crisis’ in which a generation defined by its political and economic marginalization forms a discontented constituency ripe for political manipulation, recruitment for rebellion, and violence.<sup>6</sup> This detachment from society and the gap between aspiration and actual opportunity have perhaps been greatest for urban youth, though <sup>7</sup> Richards has argued that the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts were driven more by rural malcontents.<sup>8</sup>

Richards’ analysis might appear to explain the violence against chiefs by SPLA soldiers in Southern Sudan. However, the informants for this article did not cite either resentment against chiefs or generational antagonisms as significant reasons for youth recruitment into the armed forces, or indeed as the primary concerns of “youth” during the war. Instead they repeatedly focused on the vulnerability of youth to capture by the military, and cited family roles and responsibilities as the primary consideration in the decisions taken by youth during the war. This article does not claim to offer a comprehensive explanation for military recruitment; it is based on oral research in three sites – Yei, Juba and Rumbek – among a range of ages and backgrounds, not on a survey of SPLA recruits across Southern Sudan.<sup>9</sup> But it does question the universal applicability both of an African ‘youth crisis’, and of the relevance of generational tensions to the involvement of Southern Sudanese youth in civil wars.

Youth is a complex category in Southern Sudan. As elsewhere, it is no longer a clear life-stage demarcated by traditional initiations and marital/reproductive status.<sup>10</sup> Vernacular terms [*aparak* (Dinka), *teton* (Bari) and *bula* (Kakwa)] reflect the historical life-stage category of unmarried men responsible for warfare and cattle-keeping. Although this retains some relevance in the cattle camps of Rumbek, in

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<sup>5</sup> This is one of the themes of Kurimoto and Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age and Power*. Also Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war* (Hurst & Co., London, 1999), pp. 286-7.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Richards, ‘Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: a crisis of youth?’, in Oliver Furley (ed.), *Conflict in Africa* (I. B. Tauris, London, 1995), pp. 134-70; Donal B. Cruise O’Brien, ‘A lost generation? youth identity and state decay in West Africa’, in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (Zed Books, London, 1996), pp. 55-74; Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, ‘Power to *Uhuru*’: youth identity and generational politics in Kenya’s 2002 elections’, *African Affairs* **105**, 418 (2006), pp. 51-75; David Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone* (James Currey, Oxford, 2005); Jon Abbink, ‘Being young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal’, in Abbink and van Kessel (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals*, pp. 1-34.

<sup>7</sup> See esp. Thandika Mkandawire, ‘The terrible toll of post-colonial ‘rebel movements’ in Africa: towards an explanation of the violence against the peasantry’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* **40**, 2 (2002), pp. 181-215.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Richards, ‘To fight or to farm? Agrarian dimensions of the Mano River conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)’, *African Affairs* **104**, 417 (2005), pp. 571-90.

<sup>9</sup> Juba remained a GoS garrison town during the war and has become the capital of the new GoSS; like Yei, it is in Central Equatoria State, whereas Rumbek is in Lakes State. All three towns have ethnically mixed populations but the indigenous inhabitants of Juba and Yei are Bari, and Bari-speaking Kakwa and Pojelu respectively, while Rumbek is in a cattle-keeping Agar Dinka area. Yei and Rumbek were finally captured by the SPLA in 1997: Øystein H. Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2005), pp. 161-5.

<sup>10</sup> See also Ruth Prince, ‘Popular Music and Luo Youth in Western Kenya: Ambiguities of modernity, morality and gender relations in the era of AIDS’, in Catrine Christiansen, Mats Utas and Henrik E. Vigh, (eds.) *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social becoming in an African context* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2006), pp. 117-8, fn 1.

general these terms have been blurred by wider definitions of ‘youth’ based on age (18-30, or, according to the SPLM/A youth wing, 18-45) or on political subordination or exclusion. Politically, and especially since the peace agreement of 2005, those who assert themselves as ‘youth’ do so in the belief that they would bring innovation and improvement in government if given the opportunity, in common with political youth movements elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Socially, marriage does not necessarily end the period of being ‘youth’; social maturity is recognized on a more individual and gradual basis as a person gains ‘responsibility’ within a family or community.

This article is primarily interested in the *in-between* role of ‘youth’. But rather than seeing youth as between childhood and adulthood, it sees youth as operating between two spheres: ‘*hakuma*’ and ‘home’. The opposition between these spheres is more crucial to understanding the violence in Southern Sudan than is the tension between elders and youth. Broadly, ‘government’ – ‘*hakuma*’ in Arabic – has come to denote a bundle of influences and symbols, spatially located in the town. It encompasses armies and the military cultures originally introduced by the Turco-Egyptian army in the nineteenth century, and also the literate, bureaucratic cultures of schools and government offices. Vernacular terms reflect this amalgamation of urban, military and government cultures: *tueny* in Dinka-speaking Rumbek, for example, can indicate anybody schooled, uniformed (or even clothed) or simply town-dwelling; *gela* (or *miri*) in Bari/Kakwa-speaking Yei and Juba were originally used to denote white people, but nowadays refer to the government, the military, and uniforms. Even though they fought against the Government of Sudan the SPLA belong in this sphere; they were known in Yei as ‘the *gela* of the bush’, and increasingly in the liberated areas simply as the ‘*hakuma*’. The frustration of young students and government/military employees has contributed to the instigation of rebel movements in Southern Sudan, but their frustration is over their marginalization or repression *within* the government sphere, rather than over their status in relation to elders.

Most people distinguish this broad ‘government’ sphere from an alternative social sphere, commonly expressed spatially as the *bec* (Dinka), *jur* (Bari/Kakwa) or *beled* (Arabic): the land or country *outside* the town. It is also defined as ‘home’ – *bai* (Dinka), *bang* (Bari/Kakwa) or *bayt* (Arabic) – and governed by the decision-making and dispute settlement of family heads and chiefs, which are contrasted with the ways of ‘*hakuma*’. As in Giblin’s account of a ‘private’ family sphere in Tanzania, people try to keep family issues private from the government or foreigners. Unlike in Tanzania however, the chiefs have also long played a part in keeping community affairs secret from the government sphere.<sup>12</sup> Particularly since the 1970s, the distinction between spheres has become increasingly abstract as more people have moved into the towns, gone to school and entered government or other employment. The distinction is still drawn, however, because ultimately there remains a sense of moral difference between the values and relations of the ‘*hakuma*’ and of the

<sup>11</sup> Willis, ‘Who put the ‘Y’’, p. 92; Jean-François Bayart. *The State in Africa: The politics of the belly* (Longman, London, 1993), pp. 112-5.

<sup>12</sup> James L. Giblin, *A History of the Excluded: Making family a refuge from state in twentieth-century Tanzania* (James Currey, Oxford, 2005), esp. pp. 7-12; Cherry Leonardi, ‘Knowing Authority: Colonial governance and local community in Equatoria Province, Sudan, 1900-56’, (University of Durham, unpublished PhD dissertation 2005); Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, esp. p. 281; A. N. M. Mawson, ‘The triumph of life: political dispute and religious ceremonial among the Agar Dinka of the Southern Sudan’, (University of Cambridge, Unpublished PhD dissertation. 1989), pp. 82-3.

communities outside. The moral authority of the latter has been sustained to perhaps a surprising degree during the wars, and, it will be argued, continues to be subscribed to by 'youth'. For convenience, this article will refer to these two spheres as '*hakuma*' and 'home'.

The article treats youth as a category characterised by their participation in both '*hakuma*' and 'home', but also by their resistance to full incorporation into either sphere. Fanthorpe suggests that youth in Sierra Leone had been falling into 'a political and moral vacuum' between the rural bloc and the patrimonial state.<sup>13</sup> This article argues instead that Southern Sudanese youth were actively operating in the space between spheres, and that they were largely struggling to avoid capture rather than to overcome exclusion. As one recent collection argues, being a youth can also involve escaping confining structures and enjoying a period of freedom.<sup>14</sup> The overwhelming theme in accounts of the war by those who see themselves as – or as having been – youth, is the danger of capture by the military forces. The article therefore initially examines the background to this theme of capture of youth by the '*hakuma*', but it then turns to the central role of family in military recruitment and war. The moral authority of 'home' is then further explored through discussions about marriage. This leads on to the struggles of youth to resist capture and retain a degree of independence through their in-between status, especially in the aftermath of the war, but also their investment ultimately in the moral values and relations of 'home'.

### *Capturing the youth*

The recruitment of youth into the recent civil war in Southern Sudan has fitted into a historical pattern of capture by 'government' which began with the raiding and capture of slaves by foreign traders and the Turco-Egyptian army in the nineteenth century. Johnson describes the *zariiba* system of military camps that grew up across Southern Sudan in the latter half of the nineteenth century, populated by a mixture of foreign and local, slave and free soldiers, traders and their auxiliary staff and families. There is evidence of *zara'ib* in Rumbek and along the Nile near Juba, while Yei was reportedly a market centre for the slave trade. The slave-soldiers captured locally were often young boys, and many locals also voluntarily became 'gun-boys' to a soldier-patron, attracted by clothes and guns. The *zara'ib* also relied on the capture of slaves for labour, marriage/concubinage or sale. Once captured, they would be transformed by life in the camps, as their allegiance shifted to new patrons with a different culture. The 'Nubi' descendants of the soldiers and slaves of the *zara'ib* would later inhabit the *malakia* areas of Southern towns, and remain associated with government and an urban commercial and Islamicized culture.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Fanthorpe, 'Neither citizen nor subject? 'Lumpen' agency and the legacy of native administration in Sierra Leone', *African Affairs* **100**, 400 (2001), pp. 363-386.

<sup>14</sup> Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 'Introduction' to their (eds.) *Navigating Youth*, pp. 9-28, esp. pp. 9-16; also Prince, 'Popular Music', p. 124, on youth operating actively in an in-between space. Vigh's contribution to this volume nevertheless sees youth in Guinea Bissau as a lost generation 'locked' into a position of social confinement: 'Social Death and Violent Life Chances', pp. 31-60, esp. p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas H. Johnson, 'Recruitment and entrapment in private slave armies: The structure of the *zara'ib* in Southern Sudan', *Slavery and Abolition* **13**, 1 (1992), pp. 162-73 OR in Elizabeth Savage (ed.), *The human commodity: perspectives on the trans-Saharan slave trade* (Frank Cass, London, 1992); and 'The structure of a legacy: Military slavery in Northeast Africa', *Ethnohistory* **36**, 1 (1989),

The fear that youth might be captured – whether forcibly or voluntarily – by military/commercial centres must have therefore entered local cultures as far back as the nineteenth century. Early colonial reports explained resistance to medical inspections or to sending children to school in terms of a general fear that children would be ‘eaten’ by the foreigners.<sup>16</sup> Schools have retained an association with ‘*hakuma*’ and capture: ‘My child has gone to the government’, as one woman from a cattle-keeping community near Juba recently described her son’s enrolment in the local primary school. There has long been a concern that girls in particular would be delayed or corrupted away from proper marriage by being in school.<sup>17</sup> Of course the majority of primary school pupils returned to or remained in their villages having gained some basic literacy and a smattering of Arabic or English, though there were complaints in the colonial period that they had less respect for their elders.<sup>18</sup> But a few spent years away from home studying and perhaps working, and those who sought fullest incorporation into the ‘*hakuma*’ became the Southern ‘intellectuals’ and ‘politicians’, from the 1950s onwards. Their perceived capture is expressed in recurring claims that they were bribed by northern politicians and thus sucked into the remote locus of government in Khartoum, the ultimate antithesis of the home sphere.<sup>19</sup>

It is through school and town that a person ultimately becomes *tueny* (in Dinka) or *gela* (in Bari): a town/uniformed/official person. Rural communities tend to depict those who have undergone this transformation as practising lies and trickery for their own self-interest, or even as being Government spies. They are seen to be vulnerable to monetary bribery, having transferred their allegiance away from local social and kin relations, to the patronage and immoral economy of the ‘*hakuma*’. The most striking recent illustration is the reported employment of children as spies in their own communities by the Government of Sudan (GoS) garrison in Juba; brought to wash clothes and then bribed with food by the soldiers, they were apparently captured by the military camp like the gun boys a century earlier.<sup>20</sup>

From the perspective of rural communities, school and army have been connected as ‘government’ institutions; since the 1950s, schools have often been the launch pad for boys to enter the military, including rebel forces. Riots by school pupils and university students have repeatedly played a part in the conflicts, and rebel movements have sought to harness (and control) their anger. It was largely students/schoolboys, soldiers and government employees who joined the Southern rebel camps during the first civil war in the 1960s and the more educated ones were sent out to villages to

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pp. 72-88; Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, history and representation on an African frontier* (James Currey, Oxford, 2005), pp. 126-7.

<sup>16</sup> B. H. H. Spence to mother, Yei, 31 Dec. 1914, Shetland Archive, Lerwick D12/200/1-28.

<sup>17</sup> Janson-Smith, ‘Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941’, National Record Office, Khartoum (hereafter NRO) Dakhliia 3 1/6/29.

<sup>18</sup> Juba Mission Report 1942, Church Missionary Society Archive, Birmingham, G3 Sg2; Governor Parr to Hickson, Inspector Education, 20 March 1939, NRO Equatoria Province 1/4/17.

<sup>19</sup> Beaton, ‘Report on the effects of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the Southern Sudan’, 17 March 1953, (FO 371/102753), in D. H. Johnson (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire Project, Series B, Vol. 5, Sudan* (Stationery Office, London, 1998), Part II, no. 302, pp. 228-33; Interview, Juba, 15 March 2006; Interview, Yei, 3 October 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Juba, 15 March 2006.

publicise and recruit.<sup>21</sup> Many schoolboys who joined these ‘Anyanya’ forces were later sent to schools in Uganda. The close links between education and army continued, but the perceived failure of the educated politicians to unite effectively led to the increasing prominence of military leaders in the first civil war, and would justify the overall dominance of the military in the SPLA/M.<sup>22</sup> The SPLA war effectively began in 1983 with army garrison mutinies and the movement of soldiers and schoolboys to Ethiopia to join the remnants of the Anyanya fighters who had rejected the Addis Ababa Agreement. From the perspective of those outside the ‘hakuma’, the instigation of rebellion against the Khartoum government was thus seen to be rooted within the ‘hakuma’, led by those already in the military, government or school, who felt marginalized *within* that sphere, and sometimes with disapproval from their families or home communities, fearing the punitive consequences of such ‘troublemaking’. Obvious anti-‘Arab’ feeling (increased by the GoS punitive retribution against civilians) notwithstanding, people depict the war as a ‘struggle for the chiefship’ between rival governments, into which their own youth were drawn either by direct capture or in order to defend their home.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1980s, SPLA propaganda encouraged thousands of young boys to walk to Ethiopia in the hope of going to school, but they instead found themselves in SPLA training camps and the infamous ‘Red Army’ of child soldiers, as did others fleeing towards Kenya or Uganda in the 1990s. Those labelled as ‘orphans’ or ‘unaccompanied minors’ – whether or not they were truly unaccompanied by family members – were the most vulnerable to military capture, detached as they were from the ties of family; it is the Red Army soldiers whom Jok labels as the ‘lost generation’ of Southern Sudan.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile the Khartoum government forced secondary school leavers and students into military training and service. In the GoS-controlled garrison town of Juba, one woman explained that her son was conscripted into the GoS army because ‘he went to school’. Another mother in Rumbek with the same explanation suggested that the army was simply another kind of ‘education’. Both schools and army have thus been viewed with ambivalence as a potential route to income and status but also as a means of capturing youth into the ‘hakuma’.

However, the desire for education also drew many young people to leave the South, and the difficulty of recruiting rural youth to the rebellion meant that the SPLA increasingly resorted to direct forced conscription, which was particularly resented in Central Equatoria.<sup>25</sup> The relationship with the SPLA here had always been problematic; perceived initially as an ethnically Dinka army with historical grudges

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<sup>21</sup> The Southern rebel forces of the first period of civil war became known as the ‘Anyanya’, a Madi word for ‘poison’. See Elias Nyamlell Wakosan, ‘The Origin and Development of the Anya-Nya Movement 1955-1972’, in M. O. Beshir (ed.), *Southern Sudan: Regionalism and Religion, selected essays* (University of Khartoum, 1984), pp. 127-204, at pp. 150-1; Douglas H. Johnson, ‘The Sudan People’s Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism’, in C. Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas* (James Currey, Oxford, 1998), p. 55; Interview, Juba, 15 March 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars* (James Currey, Oxford, 2003), pp. 91-2.

<sup>23</sup> Hutchinson cites a top SPLA Commander declaring that this was a ‘government war’, *Nuer Dilemmas*, p. 108. See also Kurimoto, ‘Civil War and Regional Conflicts’, p. 106; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> Jok, ‘War, changing ethics’, esp. pp. 145-155; Human Rights Watch, ‘Civilian devastation: Abuses by all parties in the war in southern Sudan’ (Human Rights Watch, New York, 1994), pp. 195-224.

<sup>25</sup> See also Human Rights Watch, ‘Civilian devastation’, pp. 189-94; Mkandawire, ‘The terrible toll’.



against Equatorians, it only gained limited support through the propaganda of certain prominent Equatorian commanders. The forced conscription was therefore often represented simply as loss, ‘because their children were being taken to die’.<sup>26</sup> Boys and young men who remained in the ‘bush’ around Yei recount how they had to hide or how they were captured, some repeatedly, escaping perhaps through the intervention of chiefs or church leaders. Even around Rumbek, where there had initially been more voluntary enlistment, the scale of deaths in the war increasingly became a deterrent. In the 1990s the ‘big young guys’ (as an English-speaking young man put it) escaped deep into the bush to hide from recruitment, and so even younger boys were ‘given to the Government’ [the SPLA]. In GoS-controlled Juba, young men had to keep a low profile because of their vulnerability: the brutal GoS security forces suspected them of supporting the rebels, unless they joined the GoS forces or their local militias, while if they ventured out of the town they might be captured by the SPLA.<sup>27</sup> And in all areas, girls were taken, more or less forcibly, to be ‘wives’ of soldiers.

It is thus not the violent strength or rebellious motivation of youth that is emphasized in telling the story of the war, but rather their vulnerability and their efforts to hide or find refuge. Once captured, the process of incorporation into the military/government sphere began. Young conscripts were exposed to great hardship and violence even in the training camps. Some sought to escape from the camps, and their parents or chiefs were ordered to make them return; one father explained that this was impossible, for his son now had a gun and was already beyond the reach of parental command.<sup>28</sup> The SPLA indoctrinated young recruits into the personality cult surrounding their leader, John Garang, and taught them to see the gun as their only means of support.<sup>29</sup> It also worked on the basis of patronage, becoming the personal bodyguard of a Commander was the best way to avoid being sent to the front line. Commanders rewarded their followers, notably with girls. One woman remembers her fear when seized by an ‘old’ commander and her partial relief that he “gave her” to a less intimidating younger soldier.

So, following a historical pattern, and in common with other rebel armies, the SPLA used a combination of violence and patronage to transfer the allegiance of young soldiers from their families to the military hierarchy.<sup>30</sup> The now-infamous training slogan, ‘Even my father, I will give him a bullet’, seemed to sum up the process, and fits an analysis of youth mobilization as shaped by generational tension and the search for alternative patronage. But it was a slogan, not necessarily a reality. The senior SPLA Commander who suggested to me that it was indeed a reality and that parents and chiefs had lost all authority over the young men, so that people are living ‘in disarray’ echoed the rhetoric used by the first British colonial officers to depict the devastating effects of nineteenth century upheavals.<sup>31</sup> Such a claim gives the

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<sup>26</sup> Interview, Yei, 3 October 2005. On Dinka/Equatorian divisions see Johnson, *Root Causes*, pp. 85-7.

<sup>27</sup> See also Human Rights Watch, ‘Civilian Devastation’, pp. 123-4.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, Yei, 3 October 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation*, pp. 52-8.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, pp. 24-33; Krijn Peters and Paul Richards, ‘Why we fight’: voices of youth combatants in Sierra Leone’, *Africa* **68**, 1 (1998), pp. 183-210; Ellis, *Mask of Anarchy*, p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Alwyn Jennings Bramly, ‘The Bari Tribe’, *Man* **6**, 65 (1906), pp. 101-3; Governor-General Wingate’s speech at Rejaf, 1911, NRO Cairo Intelligence 10/12/53.

government justification to intervene in local communities to discipline 'youth'.<sup>32</sup> In fact, families and communities have been reclaiming their children and reviving – or maintaining – their authority. The brutal behaviour of 'even our own boys' is now often excused locally by depicting them as the victims of the violence and immorality of the military sphere that captured and transformed them.

### *Sending the youth*

Military capture has been a very real experience, and for many thousands of families it led to the total loss of their sons in the war. But recruitment was not simply a matter of capture; it was often a process influenced by families and communities as well as by military force. Some youth also enlisted more voluntarily in order to obtain means of defence for the home sphere. Ultimately, the search for alternative patronage by youth has been part of their investment in their home communities. An important aspect of being 'youth' has involved going out from the home to win resources outside; young men could bring back wealth through raiding, later through waged labour, and more recently through international aid. School has become more popular even in the cattle-keeping areas as parents have come to see it as an investment: 'Once you are an educated person, you have secured the life of your own people', one young man in Rumbek explained. But given the historical nature of governments in Southern Sudan, one of the most valuable assets to be gained in the government sphere has been protection. Having a son in the administration, army or police has often been seen as the best defence for a family. Conversely, when in the 1960s and 1980s-90s some policemen, teachers and other 'government' employees are said to have been the most at risk from GoS repression, their communities were forced to seek alternative means of defence.

While their leaders have fought wars to capture government for themselves, the majority of Southerners fought or supported those wars to protect the home and to overcome their sense of powerlessness in relation to the military.<sup>33</sup> In the case of the first civil war, this was simpler in the sense that many Anyanya recruits fought in or near their home areas. Soldiers were even sent home to get bride-wealth from their fathers if they wanted to marry, to prevent abuses. The rebellion is said to have been fought to defend *local* customs and values against an increasingly centralizing and homogenizing state. Youth in the villages were also given duties as messengers and food collectors, but placed under the authority of their chiefs, with whom the rebels had generally good relations: with little outside support, the Anyanya were much more dependent on villagers than the SPLA.<sup>34</sup> The latter – despite also at times making defence of local custom their principal ideology<sup>35</sup> – were themselves a threat to homes and families. Many young men joined village militia groups to defend the community and its cattle or other resources against the various military forces. In Lakes State, the name *gal weng* (cattle-guards) was given to them by the chiefs and elders to emphasise their role of protection (as well as to bind youth to a local idea of

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<sup>32</sup> E.g. around Rumbek: see below.

<sup>33</sup> M. A. Mohamed Salih, 'The ideology of the Dinka and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement', in K. Fukui and J. Markakis (eds.), *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (James Currey, London, 1994), pp. 187-201.

<sup>34</sup> Wakosan, 'Origin and development', pp. 128, 136, 152-3; Interview, Juba, 15 March 2006.

<sup>35</sup> See Johnson, 'SPLA and the problem of factionalism', pp. 71-2.

wealth as embodied in cattle). Even the young Pari men in Eastern Equatoria who joined the SPLA partly because of generational tensions soon returned with their weapons, to defend their home area.<sup>36</sup> In general, people reacted bitterly to the intrusion of the military (both SPLA and GoS) into rural communities. One literate Yei chief claimed that the harassment was a deliberate SPLA policy to provoke people into joining them, and many young men explain how – ‘tired of running and fearing’ – they wanted to join an army because of being bullied by soldiers, or saw it as another means of defending their own community against the same army.<sup>37</sup> Some girls married soldiers to secure protection from rape by other soldiers. Youth were thus entering the military sphere to remedy their sense of disempowerment, not by their parents or older generations, but by GoS repression and increasingly by the behaviour of SPLA soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

In fact, family relations and considerations frequently determined the patterns of recruitment. Young men nearly always explain whether they enlisted or not on the basis of family. If they were the only or the oldest son, their priority was to look after their parents and siblings, while those who agreed to be conscripted claim that they did so on behalf of their family, to spare other siblings. Even those who initially stated that they joined the earlier Anyanya rebels or the SPLA to ‘liberate my country’ often later revealed that they were ‘sent’ by their father or clan. Around Rumbek, clans met the SPLA demands for a certain number of conscripts by systematically recruiting beginning with the grandsons of the first wives of the grandfather, so that boys from the most junior branches of a large family group might well escape conscription. ‘Good’ chiefs are also said to have protected families from having all their sons conscripted. No doubt boys with few or no relatives were the most vulnerable. The SPLA also manipulated family ties, by threatening to take the mother or father if none of their sons made themselves available.

The SPLA leadership in fact increasingly had to recognize the importance of local community authorities to both recruitment and the morale of the soldiers, especially in the early 1990s when the movement was threatened by military defeats and internal divisions. It gave chiefs military training and rank to try to increase their authority, as well as to incorporate them into its hierarchy.<sup>39</sup> It also turned to spiritual leaders like rain chiefs and spear masters to inspire and encourage the ordinary soldiers.<sup>40</sup> If youth could not be captured directly, alternative means of controlling them were needed, and so in the ‘liberated’ areas, the SPLM/A administration sought to bolster traditional authority and re-formalize the court structures, to manage those ‘traumatized’ youth. Thus the big men, whose own military power and wealth (and distance from their home community) enable them to contravene such laws and authority, have been depicting themselves as restoring tradition and upholding customary law.

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<sup>36</sup> Kurimoto, ‘Civil War and regional conflicts’, pp. 101-2, 108. On joining the SPLA to acquire a gun for local reasons, see also Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation*, p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> See also Ellis, *Mask of Anarchy*, p. 130.

<sup>38</sup> See also Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, pp. 80, 289-90.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, 8 October 2005, Yei; Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government*, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, 17 October 2005, Yei; Interview, 7 September 2005, Yei; Interview, 29 May 2006, Rumbek.

### *Becoming a 'full person'*

The continuing moral authority of family and home community during and since the war is particularly apparent in the subscription of youth to an ultimate ideal of responsible adulthood which requires their marriage to be recognized by their families and communities. 'Now I am getting married, I will be a full person', explained one young man in Rumbek, reflecting the emphasis placed on traditional definitions of youth and adulthood in Agar Dinka society: 'You see, up to now I was only a half-person!' Marriage and bride-wealth have been cited as central to generational tensions and a factor in military recruitment – youth may be driven to seek patronage elsewhere to escape their dependency on elders and relatives for bridewealth.<sup>41</sup> But such arguments can be too structural and economic, and ignore the real need expressed by Southern Sudanese youth for moral and social recognition and approval of their marriage, for 'full-person' status is still ultimately measured by the values and ideals of the home community. More practically, marriage is believed to need the counselling of relatives to sustain it later on. Marriage is a strikingly frequent topic of conversation, banter and debate among all ages, even in Juba, where other topics of discussion were silenced or driven underground by GoS surveillance and repression in the 1990s. In fact it is in discussion of marriage that the continuities and reproduction of an oral culture – and the investment in it by youth – are particularly apparent. And though such a culture is diffuse (hence its survival during war), it produces a sense of sacrosanctity and permanence. It is particularly obvious in the cattle-keeping areas like Rumbek, but even among those who have grown up in Uganda or who live in the allegedly debauched towns, there is little question that sooner or later parental, judicial or even divine authority will catch up with anyone who transgresses laws of bride-wealth and marital arrangements. Marriage itself is not always – despite the Rumbek youth's assertion – an immediate rite of passage to the status of being 'responsible', a common definition of mature adulthood. Even a teenager may get married, but will remain a youth, until he/she has gained in social responsibility and built up an established household, perhaps with older children. But nevertheless, marriage is a necessary precondition to later status as an adult, and to legitimate reproduction: 'here someone who is not married could never become a minister or president'.

The war saw the forcible disregard of marriage norms by soldiers. Around Yei, many people allege that SPLA soldiers committed brutal rapes of young girls and also that they raped wives on top of their husbands; the emphasis on the humiliation of the husband suggesting that this was understood primarily as a reversal of normative control over sex and marriage, as were the forced 'marriages' of daughters or wives to soldiers from both sides. But since the cessation of immediate hostilities, there has been a gradual process of addressing the consequences, and in many cases soldiers have been brought to courts to pay bridewealth, or their 'wives' have returned to their home areas (although often without the children).<sup>42</sup> It is hard as yet to quantify the judicial process, and no doubt many, especially among the commanders or Northern soldiers, have escaped it. But forced marriages by soldiers during the war do not

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<sup>41</sup> Willis, 'Who put the 'Y'', pp. 97-9; Simonse & Kurimoto (eds.), *Conflict, Age and Power*; Mats Utas, 'Building a future? The reintegration and remarginalisation of youth in Liberia', in Richards, *No Peace No War*, pp. 137-154, at pp. 140-1.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, 30 August 2005, Yei; 'No SAF soldiers to take wives back home', *The Juba Post* 18-25 May 2006, p. 7.

appear to have fundamentally overturned the ideals and norms of marriage, and indeed may have helped to strengthen them by provoking and uniting moral opposition to the use of force.

One indicator of the resilience of marriage is that bridewealth, in particular high bridewealth, remains a topic of paramount concern. Even older people complain that their children are unable to marry and blame the inflation on the increase of money from employment abroad.<sup>43</sup> In Equatoria, the conversion of bride-wealth into cash and the opportunities for income-earning have long enabled some young men to pay their own bride-wealth. But they still remain dependent on parents and uncles to negotiate and bless their marriages and to contribute symbolically. One young man in Juba, seeking proper marriage to the mother of his four-year-old child, and with independent means of paying the bride-wealth, nevertheless remained outside the prolonged negotiations among older relatives as to whether the couple were in fact distantly related and thus unable to marry. He accepted this process passively; his potential wife was more fervently afraid of the curse of the elders or ancestors. Even in refugee camps in Uganda, where a universal agreement suspended the payment of full bride-wealth until the impoverished refugees could return to Sudan, normal marriage negotiation procedures are nevertheless said to have been followed. Casual relations and pregnancies are of course common in the towns, but the *ideal* of respectable marriage remains powerful among Equatorial youth even as they complain about the bride-wealth amounts which are now measured in ‘millions’ of Uganda Shillings or old Sudanese Pounds.

In cattle-keeping communities (Agar Dinka and Mundari), bride-wealth payments in cattle have remained even more sacrosanct and more dependent on family contributions. Young and old, town and rural people alike are horrified by the idea of ‘free’ marriage, and insist that bride-wealth must be paid in cattle, not money. In Rumbek, a man’s access to a wife is dependent upon cattle contributions from relatives, and determined, like so much else, by his place in the lineage. Young men sometimes express bitterness, like one whose elder brother had already married three wives before he had married one. But as an unmarried 30-year-old man repeatedly emphasized, it is ‘impossible’ to change this system. Another young man thought that while casual sex and pregnancies did occur in Rumbek, it was better to pay the fine and compensation for impregnation than to ‘elope’ a girl and thus damage relations with her family. His brother interpreted a recent motorcycle accident of an eloping couple as an act of God: ‘if parents don’t want you to do something, you should not do it’. Girls assume that their parents will decide their marriage for them, and young and older women alike warn against the serious risk of girls causing fights by eloping with a man.

In all areas, girls have tended to invest in proper marriage, because it remains even more crucial to their status. The risk of being labelled a ‘prostitute’ is a powerful deterrent to casual relationships, though more change is evident in the towns as young women have been returning from abroad with different ideas about relationships. But even so, their own status is measured by the bride-wealth amounts paid, making them as committed to the marriage system as their parents: ‘how can I be married for less than my mother?’, as one young woman in Juba put it. Educated girls are expected to

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<sup>43</sup> Interview, Yei, 17 October 2005; Interview, 26 October 2005.

receive a higher bride-wealth, because parents include their school fees in the total amount, and this further links bride-wealth with the social status of the girl herself. And the need for parental approval runs deep. One young man in Juba told the story of an elderly Equatorian ex-politician who made so many demands of his daughter's fiancé that the couple ran out of patience and moved in together; her subsequent death was widely thought to be the result of the ongoing rift with her father. Though the young man told the story partly to criticize the greedy father, he also emphasized the danger of marriages lacking parental blessing.

But while bride-wealth remains a means of exclusion or delay, on the other hand many young men, and some young women, see marriage as another form of capture. The very responsibility that brings status also imposes limits, restricting them – or at least their resources – to a new home sphere and making study and travel more difficult.<sup>44</sup> Recently married young men typically have limited resources, having paid all their cattle or money as bride-wealth, and/or having committed themselves to providing for their new in-laws. Back in the 1940s, the increasing bride-wealth amounts in Yei District were being explained by chiefs in relation to increased labour migration: 'parents-in-law expect their sons-in-law to work in their cultivations, and... if they are in work elsewhere must demand a higher bride price to compensate for the loss of their service'.<sup>45</sup> Nowadays men earning wages in NGOs or other employment complain about the incessant demands for support from their in-laws. Some youth thus resist pressure from relatives to marry, delaying it in favour of education or career. They have not been driven into military violence or waged employment simply by the need for independent means of marriage. The acquisition of knowledge, experience and resources in the wider world and sphere of '*hakuma*' has long been an important role and aspiration of youth; simply remaining 'at home' has rarely been satisfying.

### *Avoiding capture*

Since the peace was signed in January 2005, the opportunities for youth to enter '*hakuma*' have expanded, and yet at the same time many youth have become more determined to avoid being 'captured' by it. In the aftermath of war, the absence of a youthful revolution has become apparent – though some are increasingly adopting political definitions of youth – yet youth are often more concerned with retaining their independence than with overcoming marginalization, a reflection of their inherently in-between position. This becomes particularly apparent when comparisons are drawn between youth who are seen to have been incorporated into the '*hakuma*' and those who remain outside or in-between. Soldiers are the most obviously incorporated, especially soldiers who assert their superior status over civilians. In the course of our research, a commander at a 'youth' party in Yei voiced the common accusation that civilians are cowards and should all become soldiers, the type of claim that civilians unsurprisingly resent. They retort by mocking the perceived stupidity, arrogance and greed of commanders and by emphasizing their own role in the 'struggle'. But they also argue that it can be a 'waste' for youth to join the army. There were heated arguments among a group of young University of Juba graduates in Central Equatoria

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<sup>44</sup> See also Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, p. 175.

<sup>45</sup> Equatoria Province Monthly Diary, April 1946, NRO Dakhliia 57/2/5.

when some of them enlisted in the 2005 SPLA training in Yei. Their former student colleagues argued that incorporation into the military restricts free-thinking, that it truly ‘captures’ people. There is awareness that gaining any status within the military tends to be arbitrary and dependent on the hierarchies and patronage of the army command. But being junior in the army does not quite equate to being ‘youth’, because even a junior soldier is seen to have been incorporated into the ‘*hakuma*’.

In fact a growing resentment is reported among junior soldiers as well as civilian youth regarding the monopolization of the profits of war (and peace) by senior officers. The word ‘liberation’ is increasingly used with bitter irony in reference to senior officers ‘liberating’ land, resources and even women from their rightful owners. ‘It is the commanders who liberated themselves – from poverty!’ as one young NGO employee from Yei put it. Since the peace agreement in January 2005, a largely older generation of political and predominantly military leaders have been installed in the new Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), which is already widely perceived as corrupt. The graduates who joined the SPLA in 2005, among others, not surprisingly argued that military rank was essential to any future political career. But many other literate young people wish to distance themselves altogether from the government and politics. One young Equatorian man, for example, was under pressure to enter government through the patronage of his relative, a GoSS Minister, but resisted because of the dependency and constraints of such a situation. Another refused to enter the Lakes State Government because he believed gaining office would make him too vulnerable to ‘pressures’, and that it was better to remain ‘independent’. As another Rumbek youth asserted, ‘politics is a dirty game; you cannot involve yourself before you grow, while you don’t know anything there’. Some claim to be biding their time rather than risk being contaminated by association with a corrupt and perhaps doomed administration. Thus junior members of government may describe themselves as ‘youth’ in the political arena, but are seen by youth outside government as having lost the independence and freedom of speech vital to this category: a distinction partly comparable with Burgess’ account of ‘client’ youth in Zanzibari revolutionary politics.<sup>46</sup>

‘This Government is making us all want to leave the country and go outside’. Many youth hope for education or employment abroad in order to advance their status without being captured by ‘*hakuma*’. With the influx of international organizations, the possibilities of employment for literate young people have also expanded within Southern Sudan. However, education and employment have rarely brought straightforward independence. Access to the former has often, like military recruitment, depended on family considerations and resources, or on winning the patronage of foreigners and organizations;<sup>47</sup> there is an increasing gap between the aspirations of young people in the ‘liberated’ Southern Sudan, and their capacity to achieve them. ‘The big men have sent their children abroad’, complained one young man in Rumbek: ‘it is we who are drying up here’. It is such grievances that generate the greatest frustration among youth, the results of which are perhaps yet to be seen. But their moral criticisms are so far not directed at the older generations (as Abbink has suggested) at home, but at the *hakuma*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> G Thomas Burgess, ‘Imagined generations: constructing youth in revolutionary Zanzibar’, in Abbink and van Kessel (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals*, pp. 55-78.

<sup>47</sup> See also Vigh, ‘Social Death’, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> Abbink, ‘Being Young’, p. 5.

*'Start sweeping from your own tukl'*

At the same time as revealing their struggle to participate in the wider world or in the '*hakuma*' without being entirely incorporated, youth informants also demonstrate their in-between role through their investment in 'home'. Even if they have ambition to succeed in the government sphere, they believe that this must be built on support from relatives and home community. Even if they view the village with amused and critical condescension from the vantage point of their education and experience, they nevertheless ensure that they are visibly seen to redistribute their income to relatives and villagers. For nothing is guaranteed in the unpredictable sphere of the '*hakuma*': no one knows when they may be thrust back upon the support of their families and networks of kinship and locality. As one English-speaking young man put it, if you want to succeed in politics and government, 'you have to start sweeping from your own *tukl* (hut) first', i.e. build up a support base at home before venturing beyond it. Youth place great value on their reputation and in particular on demonstrating 'responsibility' [*masulia* (Arabic), *nyintit* (Dinka)]. There is a sense that within the home community, their characters are assessed from a young age; this is the social arena in which individual recognition and advancement can be achieved. Junior and senior status is relative and changing, especially in Rumbek society, so that, for example, a young unmarried literate man living in town without employment can still be the 'responsible' person to pursue a court case regarding the marriage of his uncle's daughter. Roles and relations within families often seem to override wider age-based or political categories of youth.

Many youth have also been investing in the values and history of their rural communities, in antithesis to the perceived atrocities and failures of the military/government. Young men and women frequently tell family stories with pride, from accounts of miraculous feats by prominent relatives, to debates as to which grandfather's grave is the most powerful site from which to curse. In fact in discussing the wartime, they are more likely to recount the feats of their rain chiefs, spear-masters or other spiritual leaders, than the victories of military commanders. Sometimes they recall ritual sacrifices that helped the military, but more often they describe morally-sanctioned supernatural powers that protected people from the immoral behaviour of soldiers – a repeated assertion of the moral power of the home sphere to withstand the force of the '*hakuma*'.<sup>49</sup>

Youth also explicitly present themselves as the guardians of the home sphere. In Central Equatoria, even youth living in town or working further afield see themselves as defenders of land in their home areas and have united with rural elders to complain about recent land sales by chiefs or administrators. Some youth, here and elsewhere, also see themselves as defending their local cultures against a potentially homogenizing government.<sup>50</sup> In the cattle-keeping areas, where many youth never

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<sup>49</sup> E.g. Interview, 6 February 2006, Juba. ZANU guerrillas were more successful in identifying themselves with Dande spirit-mediums in Lan's case-study from Zimbabwe, but there are parallels in the spirit-mediums' ability to protect communities from the guerrillas: David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe* (James Currey, London, 1985), esp. pp. 157-75.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. George Lo-Lumori, 'Unique Yei needs attention', letter in *The Juba Post*, 8-15 June 2006, p. 2. Such feeling is even stronger among Zande youth in Yambio.



venture towards the town unless to take cattle to the market, the cattle camps are upheld as a more traditional way of life. Songs are central to discussing culture and upholding cattle as the currency of value. Town and government are seen not to understand the true value of cattle, nor the need for youth violence to defend them. The facial scarification of boys at initiation ceremonies has been banned by the SPLM and is frowned on by the town/literate people, which only adds to the perception among scarified youth in the camps that they are defenders of true local values.<sup>51</sup>

### *Between two worlds*

Youth are not the only ones to operate in both ‘*hakuma*’ and home spheres simultaneously. Chiefs in Central Equatoria and Lakes have not, like Giblin’s Tanzanian chiefs, been situated firmly in the government sphere, to the detriment of their popularity.<sup>52</sup> Instead, they have been the primary shield or gatekeepers to their communities; those who are remembered as the greatest chiefs are those who are seen to have stood up to ‘*hakuma*’ and kept it at bay. In order to perform this role effectively, they had to have the necessary abilities to operate in the government sphere – in many cases the chiefs appointed in the colonial period were younger men with some knowledge of Arabic and later English – and the position remains a compromise between the values of the home sphere and the requirements of government work.<sup>53</sup>

People have come by-and-large to understand the dualism of the role of chiefs. But it remains a delicate balancing-act. A chief who shifts his centre of gravity too far into the sphere of ‘*hakuma*’ loses status in the home community, as has happened especially with some of the educated chiefs in Juba or more militarized chiefs around Yei. One interesting example is an elderly town magistrate, who is the son of a famous local chief. In an interview he emphasized his knowledge of ‘international law’ and foreign languages, and also described his rain-making abilities, and his brief wartime village chiefship. He was however removed from this chiefship by his village, and an elderly woman relative of his dismissed ‘that boy’ as belonging to the ‘town’, big-mouthed and greedy for money.<sup>54</sup> Of course elderly people can always refer to younger elders as ‘boys’, but her use of the word seemed to emphasize more his pandering to government/town people and his lack of status in the village. So in seeking to earn status in two worlds, he seems to have instead slipped into the gap between, retaining a kind of permanent liminal “youth” status from the perspective of the home sphere.

The beating of chiefs by soldiers referred to at the beginning of this article should perhaps be read less as a generational attack than as a brutal demonstration of the role of chiefs as gatekeepers against the attempted incursion of the ‘*hakuma*’ into the home areas. The task of both chiefs and youth is to extract the necessary resources from each sphere without being entirely incorporated into it or bringing unwelcome

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<sup>51</sup> For a detailed examination of this issue among the Nuer in the 1980s, see Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, pp. 270-98.

<sup>52</sup> Giblin, *History of the Excluded*, pp. 55-74. Similar criticisms of chiefs are reported in Richards, ‘To fight or to farm?’

<sup>53</sup> See Leonardi, ‘Knowing Authority’.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Yei, 15 October 2005; Interview, Yei, 17 October 2005.

things from one to the other. This is a complicated and shifting task: the space between the spheres in a sense does not exist, because most people to some degree inhabit both; the boundary is highly permeable, and continually contested. It is being particularly debated around Rumbek, where post-1997 sectional violence between youth in the cattle camps has generated a mutual blame-game between communities and '*hakuma*'. From the perspective of the town and the government, this youth violence is a symptom of the backwardness of the cattle camps and the erosion of community authority by traumatized youth. But from the community perspective, it is the consequence of the introduction of guns – previously located firmly in the government sphere – into rural communities, together with the involvement of certain SPLM/A officers, which has transformed the nature of local conflicts and undermined authorities and mechanisms for resolving them. As one woman explained, in the past an ordinary person would never be seen carrying a gun, because there used to be a difference between 'government' and 'people'.

The boundary between '*hakuma*' and home spheres is also tested in debates about the neo-patrimonialism and corruption of government, something that has gained new significance in recent years due to expectations about donor and oil money. Neo-patrimonialism has been defined as an extension of household relations to a wider social and political field, but as others have argued, it distorts the character of those relations from mutual reciprocity to unequal and profiteering relations of power.<sup>55</sup> Officials and the educated are seen to 'trick' ordinary people in order to keep resources to themselves and their close relatives, and to neglect the wider networks of kinship and obligation which are so central to home community relations. While more educated youth criticize nepotism and 'tribalism' in the westernized language of democracy and emphasize their own exclusion, rural youth criticize politicians and administrators for rewarding only their closest relatives and not the rest of the village. In a sense this partial or distorted importation of home sphere relations into the '*hakuma*' is the equivalent of the import of guns in the other direction, or the claim of a town magistrate to be a village chief. However much individuals cross back and forth between town and village, government and community, these spheres remain mutually excluding because of the difficulty – and undesirability – of converting the different social and moral relations operating in each sphere. Those who import guns or the ways of the '*hakuma*' may find themselves retaining an immature status – a kind of permanent youth – unless they can also invest effectively in the norms and relations of family and village. Often, ex-Anyanya soldiers or government employees explain that they returned 'home' in the 1970s or 80s in recognition of this. One Rumbek man, for example, who had been sent into the Anyanya movement by his father and afterwards became a policeman, was called home when he became the most senior and 'responsible' person in his family – a commonly repeated pattern.<sup>56</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Social and political (rather than biological age) definitions of youth have been crucial to understanding the enlarged significance of this category in Africa. But the danger of explaining all youth mobilization for violence in terms of an African youth

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<sup>55</sup> Harri Englund, *From War to Peace on the Mozambique-Malawi Borderland* (Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, London 2002), pp. 27, 166-7.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, Rumbek, 8 June 2006.

crisis is not only that it ignores the specific local reasons for resentment and rebellion, but also that it detaches 'youth' from their families and communities by treating them as a distinct marginalized entity. It is possible to see an emerging definition of youth within the sphere of '*hakuma*' in Southern Sudan which is political rather than traditionally age-based or dependent on marital status. But this article has characterized youth during and since the SPLA war primarily by their struggle to avoid or mitigate government capture at the same time as investing in 'home' and retaining the ability to operate independently 'in-between'. Of course armed conflict, massive displacement and economic hardship have strained social relations. Young people have been caught between the curse and the gun, trying to avoid or balance the attempts by both family elders and the '*hakuma*' to capture them and their resources, and to manage the structural tensions of operating between the two. But the room for dialogue and debate contained in the predominately oral culture of local communities has helped people to adjust and adapt, so that family has remained – as O'Brien somewhat tentatively suggests for West Africa – 'the most durable of political institutions' in the context of civil war.<sup>57</sup>

The war was not fought by youth to force a generational transition, though some of its leaders may have been fighting to advance themselves within the government sphere. Informants suggest that Southern Sudanese youth were drawn into armed conflict largely through capture or to protect themselves and their communities against the military. And while young boys who were captured as 'easily manipulated victims'<sup>58</sup> may have transferred their loyalties to their gun and military commanders, this has not been a total or permanent capture of the youth. Mass demobilization has not yet occurred, but the example of Liberia suggests that reintegration may be smoother in rural areas where communities understood that youth joined rebel forces to protect 'self and family'.<sup>59</sup> Despite the negative depictions being made of traumatized young generations, the many years of war have not eradicated, and have perhaps contributed to, a moral continuity as evidenced in the deeper aspiration of many youth to become 'responsible'. Even as they have gone out to seek resources through education and employment, they have continued to invest in the relations of the home sphere, because the latter have proved more reliable, and because they are governed by a morality to which youth continue to subscribe. Governments and rebel movements have ultimately failed to inculcate an alternative morality or deeper ideology, and remain associated in the minds of young and older informants alike with the immoralities of guns and money and the one-way patrimonial relations of the '*hakuma*'.

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<sup>57</sup> O'Brien, 'A Lost Generation', p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 62.

<sup>59</sup> Utas, 'Building a future', p. 145.